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## **Small step for Texas city is giant leap for PE pipe**

GAINESVILLE, Texas — Smack in the middle of a five-mile stretch of a water utility replacement project along O’Neal Street in Gainesville, Texas lies a 4,000-foot stretch of pipe that has a lot riding on it.

After the job specification was originally written exclusively in favor of PVC pipe, the city’s public works officials and politicians were impressed enough by a presentation they saw on the benefits of polyethylene (PE) pipe that they re-wrote the spec to also include PE pipe.

“We had plans to use PE pipe on our next project, a looped system at the water tower,” said Gainesville City Manager Mike Land. “But we saw an opportunity to go to school on PE pipe with this project, so we did it.”

Since the near-mile section of the O’Neal Street project is the first in the city’s history to include PE pipe, all eyes will be on it. Land said he’d heard and read about other large cities using PE pipe for its potable water systems – cities like Indianapolis, Ind. – but his own city had not yet included it on such an application.

“One reason we hadn’t worked with PE pipe yet was our contractor’s comfort level with the material,” Land said. “He had never worked with it before. But for O’Neal Street, he got up to speed fast.”

The contractor on the project was Bob McCoy, a 25-year veteran of water pipe projects using PVC and ductile iron pipe. But after one training session on how to fuse the PE pipe sections, McCoy was ready to begin installation.

“ My experience was that a lot of people knew about PE pipe for gas applications, but not for water,” McCoy said. “This stretch that we used PE pipe for was an area where we had to slide it under a lot of other utilities, right through the middle of town. It’s an excellent section to do this installation, and it worked out very well. I’m happy to have been a part of the project at this point in my career.”

## **PE pipe in Gainesville, Texas – page 2**

Chris Dunn, a representative for a PPI-member distributor company, provided the fusion equipment for the training workshop.

“Everyone had a lot of questions at first, but the process is simple enough to pick up right away,” Dunn said. “PVC took a while to overtake ductile in this market, and PE is gaining ground on become the standard pipe material for the future.”

“We can see the advantages of this product for the right applications,” Land added.

Plastics Pipe Institute (PPI), the main trade association for the PE pipe industry, said gaining market share and acceptance in the potable water market is steadily growing.

“The heat-fused joints leave the joint as strong or stronger than the pipe itself and eliminates the potential leak points every 10 – 20 feet as found with PVC and Ductile Iron bell and spigot connections,” said PPI Director of Engineering Camille Rubeiz, PE. “And when a contractor doesn’t have to worry about the integrity of the joints, it opens up a whole list of benefits that will save the owner and the contractor considerable amount of money and time.”

“There’s going to be a lot of long-term value the city of Gainesville receives from this project,” said Bill Trotter, a representative from a PPI-member manufacturer of PE pipe. “They now have a contractor with experience using the pipe and can start using it for sliplining and horizontal directional drilling – applications that further highlight the benefits of PE pipe.”

### **About PPI**

The Plastics Pipe Institute is the major trade association representing all segments of the plastics piping industry. Member companies share a common interest in broadening market opportunities that make effective use of plastics piping for water and gas distribution, sewer and wastewater, oil and gas production, industrial and mining uses, power and communications duct and irrigation. More information is available at [www.plasticpipe.org](http://www.plasticpipe.org).

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